



Creating the good life? A wellbeing perspective on cultural value in rural development



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ABSTRACT

In the last two decades academic and policy interest in the economic growth potential of the cultural sector has risen sharply in UK, as well as in other OECD countries. Alongside this there has been a shift in cultural policies away from a focus on the public value of culture to the economic value of creativity. Where public funds are allocated to arts and culture this is heavily and increasingly skewed towards London. Although there is wide recognition of the intrinsic value of the arts and the inequalities of provision, culture is increasingly invoked as a narrowly instrumental concept for other policy aims. The new discourses of creative economies have been slow to reach rural studies and where discussions of the 'creative countryside' have taken place, notions of rural cultural value remain largely within an instrumentalist discourse. This paper is an attempt to shift the discussion to new ground by exploring cultural value through the lens of a social justice approach to wellbeing, based on the capabilities approach, using material from an AHRC funded year-long knowledge exchange project with rural arts organisations in Northumberland. The paper argues against the narrow instrumentalism of culture as a delivery mechanism for other policy agendas and offers a different conceptual framework based on social justice for considering the value of culture in conceptions of a 'good life'. It finds that using such an approach allows a different conceptual space and a clearer normative basis for understanding and arguing for the intrinsic value of culture in rural development.

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1. Introduction

In his seminal text *The Country and the City* (1973) Raymond Williams highlights the persistent construction of the urban as a site of enlightenment, advancement and cosmopolitanism, and the rural as a retreat into a traditional, idyllic existence with little worldly outlook. As others have pointed out this dichotomous rhetoric underpinned the 'Creative City' and 'Creative Class' discourses (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002), had a determining influence on regeneration policy in the last decades – particularly within a post-industrial urban context (Bell and Jayne, 2010; Woods, 2012) – and left rural advocates claiming a bias of funding opportunities towards urban-based culture (see, for example, Rural Cultural Forum, 2010). The 'creativity' on which this economic growth was

predicated extended beyond arts-based activity to include high growth areas like advertising and IT, and thus creativity was subsumed into a wider narrative of innovation and entrepreneurialism (Oakley et al., 2013; Garnham, 2006; Pratt and Jeffcutt, 2009) which seemed to further push the rural into 'the "silent majority" of non-creative places' (Rantisi et al., 2006, 1794).

However, more recently rural arts and culture has risen up the political and policy agenda in the UK as austerity policies have impacted on public investment in the arts. In an increasingly hostile policy environment Arts Council England (ACE) have been criticised for the unfairness in the way it allocates its funding investments (House of Commons 2014). Although 85% of the UK population live outside London, since 1980 public spend has been more centralised on the capital, and cultural spend per head is £68.99 compared to £4.58 outside London, despite a lower take up of cultural offer in the capital than the national average (Stark et al., 2013). Earlier concerns over lack of rural cultural spend resurfaced, with ACE responding with a *Rural Position Statement* (March 2014a, 2004b)

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and their *Rural Data and Evidence Review* (May 2015). These reports highlight higher rates of arts participation per head in rural areas compared to urban ones and, although falling short of a rural arts strategy, ACE have recognised the particularities of rural cultural production and advocate a partnership approach with rural agencies to invest in the arts and deliver arts programmes.

In the light of such concerns and disparities, and in an increasingly constrained financial climate, discussions have intensified about the need to effectively demonstrate cultural value. It is in this context that the Arts and Humanities Research Council's (AHRC) two year long multi-disciplinary research programme to 'advance the way in which we talk about the value of cultural engagement and the methods by which we evaluate that value' was launched (AHRC, 2013a; AHRC, 2013b). They were grappling with a long-standing conundrum: how to research and articulate the value of culture in policy relevant ways, a challenge summed up by Tessa Jowell, UK Culture Secretary in 2004, in a much-quoted personal essay entitled 'Government and the Value of Culture'. She argued against debating culture in terms of its 'instrumental benefits to other agendas' and rather for culture to be recognised as an important public good and therefore worthy of public spending in its own right:

Complex cultural activity is not just a pleasurable hinterland for the public, a fall back after the important things – work and paying tax – are done. It is at the heart of what it means to be a fully developed human being.

(Tessa Jowell, 2004, 7)

In the last decade there has also been an increased focus on what it means to be 'a fully developed human being' with a dramatic rise in academic and policy interest in human flourishing or wellbeing (Scott, 2012). Interest in wellbeing is linked closely to an international drive to seek alternative paradigms of development, which intensified after the 2008 financial crisis, and this has been manifested in various ways, mainly across the OECD countries, but usually results in a set of wellbeing measurements or indicators. In 2010 the UK Prime Minister David Cameron announced a 'national debate' about wellbeing and charged the Office of National Statistics to 'measure what matters' (Cameron, 2010). In 2011 a series of national wellbeing measures were developed including a national survey of subjective wellbeing. The UK wellbeing agenda has been critiqued for its focus on individual responsibility for, rather than structural determinants of, wellbeing relative to other EU countries (Tomlinson and Kelly, 2013) and the way that individual wellbeing is used instrumentally to promote other policy agendas, such as localism (Scott, 2015). In addition, the view of wellbeing as a static set of 'components' or as individual 'happiness' limits discussion about relational and dynamic constructions (Atkinson, 2013). As Oman (2017, forthcoming) cautions, evaluating the arts in relation to subjective wellbeing could potentially compromise articulations of their more complex value. So, although recent interest in wellbeing offers potential to shift narratives about cultural value, this would depend on the construct and model of wellbeing used.

Our interest in this paper is in exploring a conceptualisation of cultural value within a *social justice* model of wellbeing, rather than one focussed on subjective wellbeing, as a response to current critiques of how both the concepts of culture and wellbeing have been operationalised. These are key concepts for policy, yet vulnerable to reductionism, instrumentalism and co-option by other agendas. This has a particular effect on the way they are framed, studied and the sorts of evidence produced to inform development options (Raw et al., 2012; Scott, 2012; Jordan, 2008).

Here we attempt to shift the discussion to different ground by articulating rural cultural value through a capabilities approach drawing on our knowledge exchange¹ work with two rural arts organisations. The capabilities approach (Sen, 1980) focuses on what people are able to do and to be, and what freedoms they have to access a range of personal, social and material resources rather than a narrow focus on the resources themselves. As we argue later, a focus on freedoms can open up important conceptual spaces for considering the role of cultural value in development.

Therefore our aim is threefold: a) to forward thinking about the rural in wider dialogues on culture; b) to offer a different conceptual framework for considering the value of culture and in so doing broaden debate on what culture *of itself* may contribute to 'the good life'; and c) to challenge the narrow instrumentalism of culture as a delivery mechanism for other policy agendas. We do this by firstly fleshing out the above rationale for the paper with further reference to the literature and policy regarding cultural value and the capabilities approach. Thereafter we describe the methodological approach, introducing two rural arts case studies and how the capabilities approach has been used; the third section discusses the conceptual mapping using Martha Nussbaum's Central Human Capabilities framework. We close by discussing some implications of the conceptual mapping to create a framework for cultural value within an expanded social justice account of wellbeing.

1.1. Defining cultural value

Raymond Williams famously described culture as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English Language' (Williams, 1976, 76). That such a task remains unfinished is highlighted by the failure of policy makers to define culture in ways that resonate with peoples' experience of it rather than in administrative terms (Holden, 2006). So how might culture and the related concept of cultural value be understood? Throsby (2001) argues that for something to qualify as 'cultural' it must not only be creative, but also generate and communicate symbolic meaning. Holden meanwhile takes a narrower view of culture as 'the arts, museums, libraries and heritage that receive public funding' (Holden, 2006). In this paper, we use culture in the sense that Throsby intends it, as a set of (in this case) artistic practices undertaken by creative individuals in the context of rural places and communities which generate meaning. We also take the view that, following the ideas of Dewey (1934), art conveys meaning through experience. That meaning may be made through experiencing art in the gallery (eg Newman et al., 2012) and in the fabric of everyday life. In rural settings these can become one and the same thing when the gallery is the village shop, community hall or pub. This experience is conditioned by the 'set of attitudes, beliefs, mores, customs, values and practices that are common to, or shared by any group' substantiated by 'signs, symbols, texts, artefacts' and so on that convey a sense of shared identity (Throsby, 2001, 4). Cultural value, then, can be taken as something arising out of experiencing art, a way of understanding what cultural experience means

¹ Knowledge exchange (KE) in this context refers to the sharing of learning, ideas and experiences between academics and other individuals and organisations. It is a major strategy of most UK research funders for increasing the appropriateness and impact of research. Particular streams of funding are available for KE projects as opposed to research. The Arts and Humanities Research Council who funded this KE project seeks to 'increase opportunities for all researchers to develop their work in collaboration with public, private and third sector partners that increase the flow, value, and impact of world-class arts and humanities research from academia to the UK's wider creative economy and beyond.' AHRC website accessed 10/8/2016.

to individuals or communities; aspects include the aesthetic and the spiritual, the symbolic and the social (Throsby, 2001). The latter might incorporate how art enables a sense of connection to others, or as McCarthy puts it: ‘the social bonds created among individuals when they share their arts experiences’ (McCarthy et al., 2004). It can also denote the value of cultural institutions in their wider setting (Throsby, 2001). By inference, multiple ways are needed of capturing the many dimensions of cultural value, not all of which are amenable to reductionist methods, such as measurement, or asking people to choose between competing alternatives (Gray, 2010; Throsby, 2010; Bell and Oakley, 2015). Recent initiatives by the AHRC and the Warwick Commission on Cultural Value (2015) have made further contributions to the debate, the latter concluding that culture is so important it ought to be considered a universal human right.

1.2. Value added culture: the problems of instrumentalism in creating the good life

Justifying the value of culture in terms of other agendas is nothing new. Belfiore (2012) critiques the instrumentalist legacy of the New Labour government (1997–2010) as part of an ongoing shift from the state to the market, a process begun under Thatcherism. Accompanied by a growing recourse to managerialism, measurable targets and impact evaluation, policy pragmatism has precluded ‘more constructive, ambitious and bold articulations of the value of arts’ (Belfiore, 2012, 107). Although the creative cities narratives were meshed with a rising interest in quality of life and wellbeing during the 2000s, the intrinsic value of culture was obfuscated by a narrow instrumentalist logic, as emphasised by Vickery (2007) in his study of culture and urban regeneration policy. As Vickery (2007, 9) suggests, the concept of ‘culture-led regeneration’ was an attempt to integrate several social phenomena and the importance of culture pervaded community development policy and urban regeneration during the 2000s, with DCMS issuing specific guidance on integrating cultural and community strategies. Its *Leading the Good Life* policy document (DCMS Local Government Team, 2004) stated that, ‘Considering culture as an inclusive concept gives it a position that is key to our quality of life and to our mental and physical wellbeing.’ However, as Vickery observes, the intrinsic value of culture, meaning the way that culture can ‘extend the cognitive, ethical or intellectual values and abilities of the subject’, has been rejected in favour of social impacts that can be measured. This is illustrated by the government sponsored CASE research programme (CASE, 2010) whose purpose was to put a value on peoples’ increased participation in cultural activity. Wellbeing was invoked as part of making the case for cultural investment (using ONS data from the British Household Panel Survey). Here wellbeing was instrumentalised in terms of the costs and benefits of culture, rather than a wider commitment to the complex questions of improving national wellbeing (Oakley et al., 2013).

With a change to a Coalition government in 2010 an economic instrumentalism was prioritized in the discussion of cultural value that left ‘no room for a positive and constructive vision’ (Belfiore, 2012, 109). Indeed Culture Secretary Maria Miller in a speech at the British Museum in 2013 made this quite clear: ‘in an age of austerity, when times are tough and money is tight, our focus must be on culture’s economic impact’ (DCMS, 2013). With the election of the new Conservative Government arguments over the value of the arts is likely to remain contested political territory with Culture Secretary Sajid Javid (DCMS, 2014) exhorting the arts to ‘make what you do accessible to everyone’ while insisting on the government’s continuing commitment to artistic quality.

In recent work for NESTA² Bakhshi (2012) argues that culture cannot escape the imperative of measurement if rational choices are to be made about public investment in public value. He claims the validity of cultural economics as a way of accurately capturing culture’s intangible benefits via methodologies such as Contingent Valuation and Willingness to Pay. Advocates of the new wellbeing measurement agenda claim their approach offers a positive shift in the way culture is viewed and evaluated. A recent report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Wellbeing Economics (2014) states:

In a climate where the arts community feels under increasing pressure to justify its activities in terms of their instrumental benefits, we set out to explore whether a wellbeing approach can better capture the true value to society of arts and culture spending and to identify priorities for that spending. (2014, 36).

The wellbeing approach they describe is to use ‘the new tools of wellbeing analysis’ which consists largely of mapping various aspects and activities of life against subjective wellbeing data. These values can then also be converted to monetary valuation ‘by comparing them with the amount of income that would be needed to achieve the same wellbeing benefit’ (2014, 38). Although the report offers a welcome shift towards an expanded view of cultural outcomes including things like audience concentration, learning and challenge, shared experience and atmosphere, rather than just audience head count for example, it fails to meet their claim to avoid a ‘reductive economic analysis’. Inherently, the discourse becomes one of problem solving – both economic and social – via an instrumentalist view that seeks to measure culture’s impact, rather than discussion of the intrinsic social value of culture.

Even those cultural institutions which argue for a recognition of the intrinsic value of culture in policy can undermine that argument by continuing to focus on trying to prove culture’s instrumental benefits (Ladkin, 2014). For example, ACE (2014a, 2014b) published an evidence review on *The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society* detailing a whole range of positive impacts of the arts across four domains: economy; health and wellbeing; society; and education. They state that evidence gaps relate to the ability to prove causality between culture and wider social impacts, and the difficulties of quantifying economic gains from arts and culture. Such problems are not necessarily about research gaps, but also about the inherent difficulty of such valuation which cannot be addressed by more and better valuation in an increasingly technocratic endeavour. Such problems may need a different frame of reference. Of relevance to our focus on social justice in this paper, the report also highlights the inherent problems of addressing social equity as cultural capital is strongly correlated to socio-economic background.

In the rural studies field, studies of the ‘creative countryside’ while useful, and acknowledging that the rural cultural economies are differentiated according to context, remind us that culture is largely instrumentalised economically in accounts of rural development. Ironically perhaps, the very act of valorizing local culture may lead to a type of cultural production dubbed the ‘rural cringe’ (Bell and Jayne, 2010) as dominant interests perpetuate a romantic, idyllic view of the countryside that they seek to preserve in the interests of development. This can engender a view of rural cultural life as inherently conservative or ‘middle of the road’, in direct

² National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts – An independent charity that works to increase the innovation capacity of the UK. Nesta was originally funded by a £250 million endowment from the UK National Lottery. The endowment is now kept in trust, and Nesta uses the interest from the trust to meet its charitable objects and to fund and support its projects.

contrast with the buzz of the creative city. Here, the creative industries are the means to achieve post-industrial economic growth and cultural vitality, a model of urban-based economic regeneration that is problematic as an overlay for rural regeneration, overshadowing the rural as a location for distinctive cultural practices (Gibson, 2010; Edensor et al., 2009; Bell and Jayne, 2010). Deeper considerations of cultural value are often missing from wider theorisations of rural wellbeing and, although there are several high quality and interesting case studies, there is little joined-up theorization in rural studies regarding the role of culture in terms of its intrinsic or intangible benefits. Australian academics have led the way in recognising the intrinsic importance of cultural value (in the context of an expanded view of social wellbeing and development) in rural areas. They have brought together a critical mass of research which, among other things, has shown where the arts has 'helped to sustain a sense of self in an otherwise antithetical social and cultural context' and strengthened a sense of place and community identity (Waite and Gibson, 2013, 75; McHenry, 2011). In their work on rural creatives and the digital economy in Scotland, Roberts and Townsend (2015) conceptualise a key role for cultural capital, both tangible and intangible, in helping rural communities adapt to change within wider notions of resilience. Canadian researchers Duxbury and Campbell (2011) similarly argue for an expanded view of the value of arts and culture beyond the economic to the wellbeing of rural communities, citing as important the value of arts and arts participation in everyday life.

1.3. The capabilities approach

In order to interrogate the notion of cultural value we use a framework based on the capabilities approach. Capability theory was first proposed by Amartya Sen as a critique, on the one hand, of the traditional utilitarian approach to welfare economics and on the other, in response to a Rawlsian theory of justice based on equitable distribution of goods (a bundle of rights and resources) important for wellbeing. He proposed instead we should take account of the *freedoms* people have to 'lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value' (Sen, 1999, 87). Put simply, he proposed that we distinguish between what people are actually able to be and to do (functionings), and what freedoms people have to be and to do what they have reason to value (capabilities). We often measure functionings in public policy as quality of life measures such as how many children have achieved a certain academic standard, how many people are in employment, or what level of income people have. Sen does not argue that functionings are unimportant, quite the reverse, but if we only measure what people do or what they have achieved, we miss some very important aspects of quality of life concerned with choice and freedom. In addition, if we concentrate only on functionings as a definition of the good life, we may end up focussing too much on general outcomes and prescribing a particular way of life which may disadvantage certain groups. Due to its focus on freedoms and opportunities the capabilities approach takes into account the different ways that individuals can be limited and constrained in their choices, through economic, social, political and cultural factors (Robeyns, 2005).

Sen has always refused to develop a framework or list of capabilities due to his concerns about being too prescriptive and his preference to leave the decisions about what quality of life looks like to local communities. The philosopher Martha Nussbaum argues forcefully on the contrary, that Sen's approach risks ignoring local power dynamics and the potential for injustice, and offers no safeguards for vulnerable people in those communities. Nussbaum (2000) has produced a list of ten Central Human Capabilities (see Fig. 1 below) as a substantive account of what a basic minimum of social justice looks like for political purposes. She argues that her

list is general enough to allow an overlapping consensus on a basic minimum, accommodate cultural differences, and argues that the detail will still need to be decided through local democratic process. It is Nussbaum's list that we use in this paper.

Deneulin and McGregor (2010, 504) list four main ways in which the capabilities approach has contributed to 'a new approach for the social sciences and policy thinking': firstly, it places human wellbeing as the end goal for policy, rather than a focus on the means of achieving it (like economic growth); secondly, it posits that freedom to choose one's own good life is central to human dignity, which affords greater agency and avoids seeing humans as 'the object of policy'; thirdly, it privileges an ethical rather than a technocratic approach to policy making; and lastly, it offers a way to reframe contemporary social science issues. We use the capabilities approach for these reasons and three extra ones: firstly, it is a universally recognised and respected social justice framework with a robust philosophical basis and as such may hold normative power in policy discussions; secondly, its focus on participation means local and cultural specificities can be accommodated; and thirdly, it focusses on *ex ante* opportunity-based perspectives (rather than *ex post* welfarist perspectives) where people's situation is assessed prior to choice and behaviour rather than afterwards (Burchardt and Vizard, 2011). This creates different conceptual spaces for determining what counts as a good life (albeit a challenge for policy operationalisation) and, as we will show, a space to accommodate fuller conceptions of social justice where cultural value may have a particularly important role.

2. Methodology

2.1. Introducing the organisations

This paper draws upon a knowledge exchange project called Northumbrian Exchanges (NX), a year-long project (2013–2014) exploring rural arts practice in Northumberland and the role of Newcastle University in facilitating knowledge exchange, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The project yielded detailed insights on the role of contemporary arts to both their localities and communities, and afforded insights into the everyday practices of small cultural organisations.

Allenheads Contemporary Arts (ACA) and Visual Arts in Rural Communities (VARC) are two rural arts organisations concerned with the provision of contemporary visual arts in two remote locations in the uplands of Northumberland, North East England. The former is a company, the latter a charity. They both bring a range of contemporary arts programming, and artists – early career artists as well as those longer and/or internationally established – into rural Northumberland, and involve their respective local communities in their activities. A key feature of both organisations is the provision of artist residencies where the artist lives within the communities for up to a year. Significantly, both organisations have been established for a number of years and they have a permanent presence in those communities: in the case of ACA the owners have lived and worked there for 20 years and their home is a studio space and venue. In the case of VARC a rolling programme of year-long residencies has immersed a series of artists in the community for the last 14 years.

In many ways the founders/directors epitomise the singular artist pursuing an aesthetically driven set of choices to locate in remote places: ACA's founders wanted to settle in a remote rural location after living and working in New York; while VARC's founding trustee – also an artist – was motivated by his own experience of moving from London to live in rural France and wanted to provide a similar rural experience for early career artists. Hence the practice of ACA and VARC is embedded in the rural places

1. Life

Being able to live a life of normal length.

2. Bodily Health

Being able to have good health, including nourishment and shelter

3. Bodily Integrity

Freedom to move from place to place, freedom from assault, sexual and reproductive freedom

4. Senses, imagination and thought

Freedom of speech and expression (including artistic), the opportunity to be involved in using the senses, imagination and critical reason, and to experience and produce works of one's choice (including artistic ones). This capability is supported by a rounded education.

5. Emotions

The ability to have attachments to people and things and to love, grieve and feel a range of emotions, not having emotional development blighted by fear or anxiety. This capability must be supported by forms of human association crucial to its development.

6. Practical reason

The ability to critically engage in planning one's own life and to form a conception of the good. Freedom to observe one's own conscience and faith.

7. Affiliation

This capability has two aspects:

- a) to be able to live with others, show concern and to be able to imagine their situation. This capability is supported by protecting institutions that nourish such forms of affiliation and protecting rights of assembly
- b) having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation and not being discriminated against on the basis of race, sex etc).

8. Other Species

This capability refers to the ability to have relationships with the natural world and to care for other species.

9. Play

Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Control over one's environment

This capability has two aspects:

- a) political: freedom, participation in decisions affecting one's life and free speech
- b) material: the right to hold property on an equal basis with others and access to employment, worthy of human dignity.

Fig. 1. Nussbaum's list of ten central human capabilities (abridged).

they inhabit, yet they are connected to wider networks and communities of practice often internationally. The artists and students they sponsor and mentor are expected to make some response to the place and community as a fundamental part of their art, so they do not just provide artists 'retreats'. For example, ACA's project 'The Trading Post' invited residents to bring 'loved and unloved objects' for cataloguing and display in the ex post office and shop in the village, which they have taken over as a community exhibition space. This project was designed to explore personal histories and histories of the area through discussion of objects.

Both ACA and VARC's particularities and specific contexts provide fertile ground for considerations of rural cultural value. A particular feature of both organisations is the long-term embeddedness of contemporary arts practice in these localities, and the subsequent interrogation of the changing nature and complexities of the rural. The art produced is informed by the artist making personal connections with the location and with the community, their histories, objects and practices. This sort of long term engagement has tended to be overlooked by cultural value research, while arts evaluations have tended to focus on the impacts of short term programmes and interventions. The Northumbrian Exchanges project allowed an in-depth exploration of these

projects. All three authors were involved in this project and took part in knowledge exchange activities such as workshops, exhibitions, seminars and residential visits. One of the authors (Rowe) engaged in more immersive ethnographic work with both projects, over the period of a year. As part of this she conducted a series of nine in-depth interviews across the two projects (two artist/founders, two artists in residence, one trustee, one staff member, two representatives of voluntary agencies working with homeless people and disadvantaged families, one resident). Material from the interviews gave us insight into work the arts organisations do with voluntary organisations which support refugees and autistic children. She also carried out a focus group with eight residents from the local community in Tarsset (where VARC is located). In addition, she completed a two week live-in 'research residency' in ACA where she met many local people and had informal discussions which she recorded afterwards in her field diary. The project was investigating the ways in which knowledge exchange between rural arts and a university could facilitate added value for both. In this paper, although we refer to empirical material from the interviews and focus group, we are focussing on the joint experiences and knowledge we have gained from this project in order to offer a reconceptualization of cultural value.

It is important to point out that Northumbrian Exchanges was not explicitly conceived to research the links between wellbeing and cultural value in remote rural locations. However recorded discussions and interview questions generated a substantial amount of material which discusses these issues. In writing this paper we have used this material as a collection of informed opinions and personal testimony from key respondents, often neglected in the process of theorising value, as one aspect of informing a different way to conceptualise the relationship between culture, wellbeing and rural development. This paper therefore represents conceptual development, using Martha Nussbaum's philosophically developed framework, but one which is grounded firmly in our experiences of listening to those interacting and working with/in two arts projects in remote rural settings to interrogate a wider understanding of artistic practice, meaning and value, as elements of wellbeing and development.

Using Nussbaum's list of ten central human capabilities we conducted a close reading of the qualitative material from interviews and focus group and we considered the material against her list. Two of the authors conducted this exercise independently and then discussed this together and noted where new ideas emerged, and where the capabilities framework felt 'clunky' or didn't fit what people were saying. In these discussions we also brought to bear our joint experiences of the project and the insights we had gained ourselves as participants in knowledge exchange. The tensions produced by trying to map this knowledge onto Nussbaum's list were many, not least because Nussbaum is using a concept of ethical individualism which sets out ten components whereas much of the NX discussion allowed complex and interconnected narratives of social relations, community and place to emerge. But as often, these tensions produced new understandings and creative thinking which we used to begin to develop new conceptual understandings of the role of cultural value. Using a capabilities approach offered the valuable opportunity to reflect differently on the role of culture in ways that are more nuanced and complex than a simple reduction to social or economic value. We engaged in a conceptual process where our experience of the project and the empirical material helped us to consider different aspects of cultural value and to ground our thinking against everyday life experiences. The result is a more rounded framing of cultural value – one that is relational and personal, sometimes unpredictable, and frequently hidden from policy gaze. As such it has congruence with the capabilities approach to wellbeing, one we wished to explore via conceptual mapping for the reasons outlined above.

3. Discussion of the conceptual mapping

One of the first things we came up against in doing this conceptual exercise was the realisation that it may be counterproductive in understanding cultural value to try to separate the art from the artist. This speaks very much to Dewey's arguments of the need to see art and artist as merged in the creative experience (Dewey, 1934). In the organisations discussed here sometimes the art was co-produced through workshops with the community, sometimes it was produced through a sole artistic process but this production was meshed with the personality and positionality of the artist in that community and place. The aspects of 'otherness' which artists often brought, their different modes of living (often a product of economic insecurity and/or the need to be mobile), their idiosyncrasies, different means of expression, different identities, values and social networks were all inter-related in the narratives of how art was perceived and engaged with. Therefore our focus on 'culture' was a challenge when trying to map onto Nussbaum's list of individual wellbeing as the NX project showed us clearly this is a

complex set of interwoven narratives about relatedness between art, artists, place and community. However, her list is set within recognition of the importance of social institutions which engender human flourishing, including affiliations and the 'social basis of self-respect'. So we found that it was not so problematic finding a place for discussions of how cultural value related to social relationships, for example. More problematic was the notion of place, belonging and identity, which Nussbaum's list does not really speak to. However, her list does give scope to consider feelings of attachment to nature, and to be attached to 'things' outside oneself and we have, somewhat hesitantly, used these as containers for notions of place, whilst recognising the limitations of this.

The areas of Nussbaum's list where the discussion on the arts does not focus very much or at all are the first three: life (longevity), bodily health (including nourishment and shelter) and bodily integrity (freedom to be mobile, freedom from assault, sexual and reproductive freedom). Perhaps not surprisingly, the arts are not generally invoked as factors which directly enable these sort of capabilities. However, discussions within the NX project highlighted the importance of ongoing international artist residencies in bringing a more diverse set of people into a remote rural setting where, for example, black people and gay people are perhaps deemed as 'other'. This may help to break down social norms or discriminatory attitudes which could affect (perceived and actual) personal security and bodily integrity. This helped us to think more broadly about the indirect ways that art can address some of these aspects of wellbeing.

In general though, the capabilities which can be most convincingly related to cultural experience are 4–9 and to a lesser extent 10. This was interesting as these capabilities really flesh out the less well understood and less represented (yet more dynamic and unpredictable) aspects of wellbeing, like sensory experience, practical reasoning and play. We have summarised the key points raised by this mapping into the table below. To be clear, we are not claiming an empirically based study reporting on, or predicting, what art does, but rather advocating a way of thinking differently about culture and its value to rural communities, that connects explicitly with what it takes to be a fully developed human being. A way of thinking that is nevertheless informed by our own knowledge and respondents' knowledge of arts participation and engagement. Thus we are not presenting any empirical data here in order to offer a rich understanding of the impact of cultural experience on respondents, rather we are taking points raised in the NX project as a way of developing thinking in regards to using the capabilities approach. We are also not making generalised statements about all art, artists and culture. Our theorizations are informed by our experience and knowledge generated from a particular setting – a long term involvement with art and international artists in two small rural communities, through two arts organisations with a particular ethos. We are using the NX project as a cross check against our own thinking about how culture might feature in a particular conception of the good life (following Nussbaum's list of capabilities), and exploring what opportunities the capabilities approach may offer to discussions of cultural value in a rural context. With these points in mind, summarised below in Fig. 2 are our judgements of how cultural value may map onto Nussbaum's list.

4. Discussion

Taking a view of culture as experience and meaning and connecting it to social justice notions of wellbeing positively in the way we have done rejects a precise articulation of cultural value – and the need to 'prove' in advance what art does in terms of other agendas (the instrumentalist approach). Here, cultural value

1. Life	
2. Bodily Health	
3. Bodily Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art/artists present different cultures and identities which can challenge discriminatory attitudes towards ‘otherness’. This may affect feelings of safety/ perceived or actual bodily integrity.
4. Senses, imagination and thought	<p>Art practice/appreciation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers contemplative spaces to reflect • Provides means of artistic creation and expression for those who need it, including those who didn’t recognise their need before • Challenges thoughts and imagination: develops critical appreciation and new ways to see things, including observation skills • Being around art and artists develops critical appreciation of and confidence to express views about art, including negative ones • Broadens views of the world: different people, culture, lifestyles • Provides opportunities for life-long learning for individuals and communities • Provides new experiences • Sometimes puts residents outside comfort zone: art is not always easy
5. Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists and participants forge strong attachments through creative process • Creation of material objects of art become important symbols of emotion and memory • Art reflects back to people their feelings about their place e.g. shows them how others see it, allows them to see its uniqueness and value, but also to feel less marginal and marginalised • Participation in art is convivial e.g. helped dispel loneliness • Art engagement can develop self-respect and engender feelings of being worthy and valued, e.g. artist working with refugees on their own terms
6. Practical reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps build confidence to express desires and views about the future • Builds confidence in doing things/ having agency • Broadens views of the world and opens ideas about the future, the different possibilities for individuals and communities. • Provides reflective spaces to ‘work out’ future trajectories • Allows people to critically examine complexities and conflicts of place and community through art
7. Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artists with particular ethos working in communities introduce notions of different ways of being, introduces new cultures, values, views • Enables friendships between people from different backgrounds • Provides different and new ways of expressing/relating (e.g. for autistic children) • Facilitates relationships through creating something together: powerful effects shared creative experience and allows community to exercise duty of care to artist and to those coming in from outside e.g. refugees, children with special needs • Provides a means of becoming part of the community for newcomers • Demonstrates intergenerational value of doing creative things together • Can enhance strong attachment to place through art
8. Other Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates being closer to nature through art, noticing things more, including ‘re-imagining the familiar’ e.g. understanding complexities of apparent ‘naturalness’ of landscape, or seeing familiar landmarks differently. • Provides expression for the responses to landscape linked to working practices: e.g. artists relate to the land, farming, and to farm animals
9. Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides pleasure of sensory experiences for their own sake • Creative process validates exploration, experimentation and play for their own sake as part of what makes life ‘good’ • Creates opportunities to have fun together • Allows enjoyment of artist idiosyncracies and difference • Facilitates creation of shared memories which generate laughter
10. Control over one’s environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows political expression in different forms (more suited to individual expression needs) • Gives permission for different forms of exchange (non-monetary) for material wellbeing e.g. work in exchange for studio facilities • Highlights lack of material reward as a problematic for artists in pursuing artistic vision/ambition

Fig. 2. Conceptual mapping of cultural value onto Nussbaum’s list informed by NX project.

emerges through a process of conceptual reframing using the capabilities approach and in depth knowledge of local contexts. It is this that is distinctive about the exercise we are describing. In this section we discuss six main aspects of this work which highlight how using Nussbaum's approach has the potential to bring different perspectives to a discussion of cultural value.

4.1. Validation of under-represented, intangible aspects of culture

Many of the more intangible benefits of culture are difficult to articulate, predict and assess within a policy context. Not only that, they are difficult to justify as essential to human wellbeing, being often seen as positive side effects of the main policy focus on economic or health benefits. However, these were the aspects which resonated most strongly in the two communities regarding culture. For example, participants highlighted the ability to have pleasure, play and/or experiment as being important. Using Nussbaum's framework, many of these more intangible aspects and effects of culture may be more fully articulated and considered as essential (e.g. 'Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities'). These aspects are seen as an *end point* of development rather than a positive *side effect* of development and therefore are given a weight which recognises the importance of such things in being 'fully human'.

4.2. A more dynamic, expanded and critical approach to wellbeing

Instrumentalism regarding cultural value is predicated on assumptions about the nature of human development and often based on a 'components' approach to wellbeing which has been critiqued by Atkinson (2013). Often wellbeing is conceptualised as a platform where a number of components or foundations must be in place to support good wellbeing (cf. the Stiglitz et al., 2009 report). This produces a rather static and compartmentalised inventory of wellbeing, driven by what can be objectively measured, where the goal is the improvement of a series of conditions (e.g. income, health, education, housing). Whilst we are not denying the importance of such objective quality of life standards and their profound effect on a whole range of capabilities, we argue that a dominant focus on this can lead to a very 'thin' view of what quality of life means, particularly for the poorest, where basic needs may be met through a welfare system but the things that actually make life worth living, or provide people with the opportunity to (re-) evaluate, (re-)assess or build confidence are seen as frivolous. This is not to argue that the arts are the only way these capabilities may be enabled, but we cannot predict which people need such artistic outlets, people themselves may not realise the role the arts may play in their lives until exercised, and therefore the provision needs to be for everyone.

Although there is increasing recognition of the need to include subjective indicators of wellbeing, questionnaires are often framed within a components approach ('how do you feel about your health, education, income' etc). Cultural value is therefore either under-represented in such instruments or missing completely, reflecting its marginalisation within dominant views of wellbeing economics. In addition, the components approach to wellbeing does not reflect the way that many people experience everyday life, it reflects what is easily measurable, rather than what life is actually like. Wellbeing conceptualised as a more fluid and dynamic concept which also encompasses the unpredictability of life, the ability to feel pain, the ability to resist dominant scripts of wellbeing, and to respond to and learn from adversity in order to critically examine and determine one's life, rather than a dominant focus on the improvement of a series of material conditions, finds more scope within Nussbaum's list. Therefore the value of art and culture, being sometimes

challenging, confusing, emotional, uncomfortable or even impenetrable allows a conception of cultural value without making judgements about whether that engagement has had 'positive' (narrowly defined) and measurable effects. As Ladkin (2014) argues 'the greatest possible value of the arts has been, and might continue to be to oppose, rigorously and constitutively, dominant and dominating ascriptions of value'. The capability important here may be the opportunity to engage with a critical project to determine one's own life, and to enable resistance to a vision of life measured against a particular set of criteria.

4.3. Valuing access rather than impact

As the focus is on *freedom* to experience culture as a basic human capability, rather than what culture does for people, the measurement of cultural *impact* is afforded less importance. The focus is on whether a person has the capability to, for example, express themselves artistically (if they chose to) not on what that experience has done for a person which is inherently difficult to determine, especially over the short term. We can't always say in advance what art will do for a person, community/individuals couldn't necessarily predict what the effects of having an artist immersed in their community would be, or how this would build over time. Recognition that access to culture is part of the necessary institutional arrangements which promote the ability to live a fully human life means less emphasis on justification for cultural provision grounded in outcomes, and more emphasis on actual provision grounded in equality. Of course, this is not to ignore the important, and equally tricky, accountability questions of how we ensure that freedom to access art is equally available in society, but that is a different issue and should not prevent an attempt to provide it.

4.4. Culture as the norm

An important argument of the capabilities approach is that capabilities are developed and exercised as a part of everyday life for everyone as a minimum standard of social justice. What came out strongly from the NX project was that art and artistic practice was an everyday and often embedded part of life in these communities where people could choose to engage or not. In terms of shifting to development whereby capabilities are formed around everyday life, the ability to access art/artistic expression as something 'normal' rather than a special privilege seems important to highlight. We say this whilst being fully aware of the dynamic social relations which will mediate access to these arts projects but address that partially in the next point.

4.5. Ethos of arts organisation and living good lives

Although the founders of the ACA and VARC cited a number of factors which motivated them to set up an arts organisation, their narratives chime closely with existing research on the motivations of creative practitioners highlighting their desire to 'live well' through making work which means or does something in society (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011; Luckman, 2012). Their conception of their own good life is integrated with meaningful art work. Therefore, the ethos of an arts organisation and the nature of their everyday practice seems important in a discussion of the intrinsic value of culture, explicitly recognising the heterogeneity of the arts and culture sector, and power relations in the social spaces in which access to art takes place. In terms of the capabilities approach and its focus on justice, it could be argued that supporting cultural organisations, where there is a strong ethos on participation and engagement, goes some way to addressing the problems of social

inequalities, although, as mentioned above, we don't seek to underplay inherent power differentials and complex social relations.

4.6. The draw of the rural

ACA's founders chose to relocate from Manhattan to Allenheds and pursue contemporary art in a remote rural place, reflecting their desire to live *outside* the mainstream contemporary art world in order to make art in their own way and where they could live 'interesting lives' and 'be fully human', as one of them said. They have always maintained they are not community artists, preferring the notion of themselves as artists in a community. The ability to relate to a particular community over the long term and to include the community in discussions and explorations of the rural, of environmental and social change, informed their choice of location. The founder of VARC chose to set up the trust within the family estate as a philanthropic act but his reason in setting up VARC was closely linked to his own life choices, plans and values as an artist and he has arguably provided ways for others to explore their own choices and values through art e.g. artists in residence, members of community and the users of various social and voluntary services. The motivations of their founders reflect the ethos of both organisations, the desire to be critically embedded in and exploring the rural, to connect long term with a particular community and to support art/artists to make 'good art' which means something to someone and extends benefits more widely. As Luckman (2012, 9) argues this sort of detailed understanding from creative artists themselves who choose to locate in rural areas with a particular ethos 'are marginal to the dominant theoretical and policy scripts' of the creative industries but they give us a clue to the nature of both the work and how rural communities interact with it.

5. Conclusion

Both culture and wellbeing policy narratives have been allied to ambiguous narratives about the greater individual responsibility of citizens and of communities to create their own Good Life, within an increasingly constrained financial climate. Using Nussbaum's list has enabled us to move beyond the intrinsic/instrumental cul-de-sac and to reframe the value of culture from a social justice perspective on what a minimum standard should be for a fully developed human life. Both instrumental and intrinsic aspects of culture are intertwined, hence the difficulty of one language and set of managerial technologies to describe and measure effect of culture. There are aspects of both intrinsic and instrumental value for culture in Nussbaum's list. Culture is important in and of itself in terms of her list e.g. provides the opportunity to engage in artistic works of one's choosing. Of course artistic processes and/or art are not the only things which enable expression but for some section of the population, and perhaps particularly for certain vulnerable groups, forms of creative expression, nourished within a particular institutional or organisational ethos, are important and arguably cannot be reproduced in the same way by other means (see Raw et al., 2012). Culture also has an instrumental role in terms of some capabilities e.g. provides opportunities for affiliation where the focus is on the relationships produced through co-production rather than the art itself. So we are not against instrumentalism, our critique is against economic instrumentalism being the *pre-dominant* criterion for public funding of the arts. Although we would not disagree that culture has an important economic role to play and that this is important for rural development more widely, Nussbaum's list is useful here in explicitly not considering economy/income (as this is a resource for capabilities, not a capability itself) thus helping us make the important distinction between

freedom to have a good life (in whatever way we determine our lives) as an end point and the various resources (including income) which support some aspects of that as the means to that end.

Setting cultural value in a social justice framework as a minimum standard for public policy addresses at least some of the questions about who should provide for arts and culture. Based on our engagement in NX and our collaborative reflections during and after that experience we argue that access to arts can contribute importantly to at least six aspects of Nussbaum's ten central human capabilities. We do not argue that participating in arts and culture is a fundamental human capability, that would be prescriptive and we are satisfied that Nussbaum's list offers scope within a broader idea of participating in activities people have reason to value. Rather we argue that *access* to culture should be part of a minimum social justice account of human wellbeing based on capabilities. In such a view, cultural spend can be more easily justified as a provision narrated in the context of social justice, without the need for such a dominant focus on impact measurement. If we argue that culture has the potential to play a part in providing and developing central human capabilities, and that these should be the end point of development, then there is clearly a role for public policy to support it. Furthermore, that support should happen equally across the population, as capabilities relate to every human being. This is clearly a challenge for cultural spending bodies, who see rural communities as a disproportionate draw on resources and concentrate funds on large venues where footfall is higher.

In terms of social justice regarding both cultural value and wellbeing, as Oakley et al. (2013) point out, those most able to benefit from increased public spending on culture, often already have a rich stock of capital on which to draw. Therefore further studies on the everyday role of the arts in embedded arts communities in rural areas seems important, to interrogate in depth the social stratifications of that engagement. Therefore, the *ethos* of a rural arts organisation and the nature of their everyday practice seem important in a discussion of the intrinsic value of culture, explicitly recognising the heterogeneity of the arts and culture sector, and power relations in the rural social spaces in which access to art takes place. This may break down polarised views focussed around the elitism of art as a taken for granted part of life for those who can afford it (but as a special treat for all others), the ability of those with resources to continue to access it, and their positionality therefore to determine arts policy, that increasingly requires measurable economic outputs. Using a capabilities framework provides more normative power to shift policy discussions and measurement from a focus on *impact* to a focus on *access*, thereby helping to avoid intrinsic/instrumental cul-de-sac, because human capabilities, such as play, or emotional development, are not seen as positive by-products of cultural policy, but as an end point of development, of what it means to be 'fully human'.

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